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To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Comment from a law student on the proposed settlement

I've been watching Microsoft squash other companies' products since the early Nineties. While the 'commonality' of desktop software we're now surrounded with makes some things simpler, it weakens our overall technology base in two ways:

1) The strength of the Internet is in platform-neutral interoperability; but Microsoft has a history of corrupting Internet standards (their "embrace and extend" philosophy) which results in the de facto standards being /Microsoft's/.

We weaken ourselves when the growth medium of our electronic communications systems is hostile to new genotypes - but that is exactly the sort of environment a monopolist wants.

2) Like it or not, there are forces in the world hostile to American interests. A homogeneous software environment makes virus writing and vulnerability exploitation easier, especially when the environment allows coders to do so much with so little caution.

Even Mr. Gates's recent memo to his employees telling them to "focus on security" can't overcome the basic weakness of a single strain of operating system and application suite. If we allow this to persist we're setting ourselves up for extinction when a /real/ challenge (not just a business challenge) to our technological survival rears its head. Darwin's theory assumes that variation in type already exists. We (and Microsoft) won't have time to 'create a new way' when the crisis comes.

I don't think the settlement does enough to restrain this very powerful (and very self-absorbed) company.

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